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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF DON HASDAI CRESCAS

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## CHAPTER II

THE existence of God is proved by Crescas in a very simple manner. The proof runs in the following way: Whether there is a finite or an infinite number of effects, or whether an infinite series of causes is given, but as long as the series is infinite and all things are caused, we do not find in nature a thing that is absolutely necessary of existence. But to conclude thus is impossible, for if all beings are possible there must be some power that calls forth existence, so as to overbalance privation. It follows that there is a being necessary of existence.<sup>67</sup> In this proof the force of the argument, as Spinoza well remarks, is not in the impossibility of an infinite act or an infinite causal regressus, but the stress is laid on the absurdity of positing a world of possibles.<sup>68</sup>

וְהַנָּה אִם שֵׁהּוּ עֲלוֹת וּעֶלְלִים בָּ"ה או בָּבָ"ה אֵין הַמְלָט מִהְיָה עַל  
<sup>67</sup> אחד לְכָלְלָם לִמְהָ שָׁאֵם הָיוּ כָּלְמָ עֲלוֹלִים הָיוּ אָפְשָׁרִי הַמְצִיאוֹת בְּבָחִינָה  
עָצָם וּהָם צְرִיכִים לְמִכְרִיעַ מִצְיאוֹתָם עַל הַעֲדָרָם וְהַעֲלָה לְכָלְמָ  
הַמְכֻרְעָת מִצְיאוֹתָם וְהָוָא הַאֱלִי"ת, *Or Adonai*, Tr. I, sect. 3, ch. 2, p. 22 a.

<sup>68</sup> It will be best to quote Spinoza's own words on the subject: 'Verum hic obiter adhuc notari velim quod peripatetici recentiores ut quidem puto, male intellexerint demonstrationem veterum qua ostendere nitebantur dei existentiam. Nam ut ipsam apud Iudeum quendam Rab Ghasdai vocatim reperio, sic sonat, si dantur progressus causarum in infinitum, erunt omnia quae sunt, etiam causata. Atque nulli quod causatum est competit, vi suaे

Here may be considered the proper place to say a few words about the relation of Crescas to Spinoza. That the latter knew writings of the former and studied them, we know from the passage quoted, where Spinoza mentions Crescas by name, and very accurately explains the latter's proof of the existence of God. The question is whether Crescas really exerted any marked influence upon the formation of Spinoza's system. Joel endeavoured in several of his writings to establish that Spinoza was under the influence of Crescas, and attempted to trace the influence in some of Spinoza's important theories. It will be necessary for us to discuss these points of similarity as they come along. Kuno Fischer (in his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, V, II, Spinoza) attempts to refute all arguments put forth in favour of influence, and concludes that there is nothing in common between them.<sup>69</sup>

Fischer's arguments, however, do not seem conclusive. I wish to call attention to the first point in Spinoza's system, namely, the existence of substance or God. The way Spinoza, in his *Ethics*, conceives the existence of a first cause is strikingly similar to that of Crescas. It is true that in the *Tractatus Brevis*, his first philosophical essay, Spinoza proves that God must exist, in the famous Cartesian way through the conception of the idea of God. But in the *Ethics* the basic conception of the whole system is that, in looking upon nature, we must come to the conclusion

naturae necessarie existere, ergo nihil est in natura ad cuius essentiam pertinet necessario existere. Sed hoc est absurdum; ergo et illud. Quare vis argumenti non in ea sita est, quod impossibile sit dari actu infinitum aut progressus causarum in infinitum; sed tantum in ea quod supponatur res quae sua natura non necessario existunt non determinari ad existendum a re sua natura necessario existent'. *Epistola XII*, ed. Van Vloten, II, 45.

<sup>69</sup> *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, II, pp. 265-73.

that there must be a cause which is necessary of existence by itself. ‘This conception’, says Kuno Fischer, ‘which is put at the beginning of his philosophy, supports the whole system.’<sup>70</sup> Taking his first definition, ‘By that which is self-caused, I mean that of which the essence involves existence’, and his axiom, ‘That which exists, exists either in itself or in something else’: again, axiom three, ‘If no definite cause be granted, it is impossible that an effect can follow’, as well as his proofs of proposition XI, we see clearly the underlying thought that in the world of things where there is a multitude of effects there must be something which is a *causa sui*. Placing the words of Crescas, ‘Whether there be causes and effects finite or infinite, there is one thing clear, that there must be one cause for all, for if all are effects there would not be anything which is its own cause of existence;’ besides this conception, one cannot help feeling the similarity between the initial points of these two philosophers, and the influence of the earlier upon the latter is not improbable. The fact that Crescas and Spinoza are two opposite poles, the one religious to the extreme, the other irreligious, should not deter us. In spite of the fact mentioned, God is the very centre of things to both; and though, according to the latter, God acts in a mathematical way with absolute mechanical necessity, and, according to the former, in a personal way, yet the basic quality of God in both systems is the same, namely, absolute limitlessness; consequently, the philosophers concur in a goodly number of questions.

For this divergence in regard to religion really has nothing to do with the first conception of the existence of God. The conception itself is independent of religion,

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

and might as well be taken by Spinoza as the basis of his system. Fischer, as if feeling that in quoting Spinoza's letter where Crescas's proof is cited in such a way as to resemble Spinoza's own, he weakens his case, attempts to strengthen his arguments by alluding to the manner in which Spinoza speaks of Crescas. He names him 'quendam Rab Ghasdai'. Fischer infers that this proves sufficiently that Spinoza hardly knew Crescas and his teachings, and winds up by saying, 'Descartes was not a "quendam" to Spinoza.'<sup>71</sup> Such an argument is hardly conclusive. Spinoza wrote to Lewis Meyer, who surely hardly knew of Crescas, and to whom he was a 'certain'. But if Fischer were acquainted with the difficulty of Crescas's style and its remarkable brevity, he would know that Spinoza could hardly give such a lucid and penetrating summary of Crescas's proof by mere hearsay without having studied his works carefully. Again, his additional remark (in *Ep. XII*, quoted above), 'non in ea sita est quod impossibile sit dari actu infinitum', shows that he read Crescas's whole refutation of the Aristotelian doctrine. The fact that Spinoza calls him a peripatetic, while Crescas combated the Aristotelian doctrines, is not sufficient evidence of his ignorance of Crescas's work. There was still left in Crescas enough of the philosophy of his time to entitle him to that name.

#### ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE.

It was an old debatable question with the mediaeval philosophers, whether existence is identical with the essence of a thing or is something separate. Ibn Sina taught that

<sup>71</sup> *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, II, p. 273.

existence is an accident of essence.<sup>72</sup> Ibn Roshd, on the other hand, claimed that existence can be nothing else but identical with essence. According to Ibn Roshd and his followers then, in regard to God, since His essence is absolutely different from the essence of the rest of beings, it follows that His existence will also be different in kind, and in positing existence to both God and other beings we do so in an absolutely homonymous way, not denoting any common relation but the name.<sup>73</sup> But also the followers of Ibn Sina agree to this conception, for they concede necessarily that with God existence is not an accident, but identical with essence. And since with other beings it is only accidental, it follows that the name existence in applying it to God and to man is employed in an absolute homonymous way.

Crescas does not agree with either view. In criticizing Ibn Roshd's view, he points out the logical difficulty involved in its assumption. If existence is identical with essence, what then does it add as a predicate? In stating that God exists, the predicate does not add anything; it amounts to saying, God is God: the same is true of any other proposition of the same kind. Again, if, as Ibn Sina says, existence is only an accident, it needs then a subject; but the subject must also exist, hence another subject must precede it, and so on to infinity. Again, since existence is the real form and stay of the subject, for without it it would be not-being, how could we call it accident? This view must necessarily be abandoned. But the other view is untenable also. It must, therefore, be concluded that

<sup>72</sup> מ"ג פרק נ"ז ועין פירוש קרשנש (see also Crescas's Commentary); *Guide*, p. 204.

<sup>73</sup> *Or Adonai*, p. 21 b.

existence, while not identical with essence, is essential to a being.<sup>74</sup> In this way, existence can be predicated of everything, of the essence as well as of accidents, though there will be a difference of degree. The general conception, however, must be understood in a negative way. The thing we predicate existence of is to be understood not non-existing. As a result, when we speak of the existence of God, and the existence of other beings, it must not be absolutely homonymous, but there may be a certain relation, namely, that the negation—for existing equals not non-existing—has a difference of degree. The not non-existence of God is due to himself, while of the other beings to their cause.<sup>75</sup> What Crescas wants to prove by his naming existence essential is that it is one of the expressions of essence, implying that there are more.

Spinoza seems to believe that existence and essence are different in the case of other beings, for essence depends on natural law, but existence on the order of the causal series. In God, however, existence is not distinguished from essence, for by definition, existence belongs to his nature.<sup>76</sup>

#### ATTRIBUTES AND UNITY.

Maimonides' theory of Attributes, which is criticized by Crescas, resembles in its entirety the other theories of the preceding Jewish philosophers, with a strong emphasis on the negativity of their conception. A thing can be described, says he, in four ways; either according to its definition or

ובאשר יתחיב שאוננו עצם המהות כמו שהתבאר מוספק הקורם <sup>74</sup> הרראשן ישאר א"ב שיהיה עצמי למוחות,

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Cogitata Metaphysica*, Part I, chs. 2, 3.

a part thereof, or by one of its essential qualities, or by relation to some other things, either to time, place, or another body.<sup>77</sup> In regard to God, attributes describing in any of the above-mentioned ways are inapplicable, for since we posit Him simple, and one, and above all categories, it is evident that He cannot be defined, nor can we speak of a part of Him nor of any essential quality in Him. As for relation, there is no relation between Him and place or time, or any other being, for they are all possible of existence and He is necessary. There remains, therefore, a fifth way of describing, namely, according to the actions. Such kind of attributes it is not impossible to apply to God, for they do not imply any plurality, change, or division. This form of attributes is paronymic, after the actions we perceive. There are, however, essential attributes, that is, such as appertain to the essence without having any bearing on the actions. Such by the consensus of religious leaders and philosophers are existent, living, knowing, wise, potent, and willing. It is to be noticed that Maimonides includes will as an attribute just as his peripatetic predecessor Ibn Daud has done, while Saadia and Bahia do not count it (cp. Introduction). How then shall we understand these essential attributes? Of course, it is evident that in applying them to both God and man we employ them in an absolute homonymic manner, for there is no possible relation between God and other beings. These attributes have to be conceived purely negatively, and yet, says Maimonides, they convey to us some positive notion. He proceeds to explain his assertion. The statement that God is existent implies only that He is not non-existing, or the denial of privation;

<sup>77</sup> ב' חלק א' פרק נ"ב, *Moreh*, I, 52 (p. 72a); *Guide*, p. 178.

and when we say that God is living, we only assert that His existence is not like the existence of dead matter. In a similar way, the more difficult attributes are explained; potent means the denial of weakness; wise, the privation of foolishness; willing, the absence of disorder. This, in short, is the Maimonidian theory of attributes.<sup>78</sup>

Gersonides, the immediate predecessor of Crescas, had already objected to such a theory. He argued against the assumption of absolute homonymity in applying the attributes to both God and man. It is impossible, he says, to assume that there is only a likeness of name in the two applications of the attribute, if it is construed to have a negative meaning. Take, for example, the negative concept of existing, can we say that the denial of non-existence which the concept implies has two absolutely different meanings? We are forced, then, to admit that the difference is only in degree; why then can we not hold the same conception in regard to positive attributes, namely, that they are applied to God and to man in different degrees of perfection?<sup>79</sup> We have noticed a similar argument advanced by Crescas in regard to existence. We shall now pass on to Crescas's criticism of Maimonides' theory. Maimonides is loath, says Crescas, to ascribe to God any attributes that will bring Him in relation with something else, for fear that it may imply a privation in His nature,

ואמרנו בו מפני אלו הענינים שהוא יכול והכוונה באלו<sup>78</sup>  
התארים שאינו לואה ולא סכל ולא נבלה או עות וענין אמרנו לא לואה  
שמציאו ייש בה די להמצאת דברים אחרים זולתו, וענין אמרנו ולא  
סכל שהוא משיג כלומר כי . . . . וענין אמרנו לא נבלה ולא עות כי  
בכל אלה הנמצאות הולכות על סדר והנהנה  
p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> *The Battles of the Lord*, II, p. 134 (Milhamot, ed. Leipzig, 1866).

and yet he allows himself to describe Him with active attributes. But, asks Crescas, does the application of such attributes not imply any defect in God's perfection? When we say, God created or made, does it not mean that before the act His power was potential and only later became active? Such an implication suggests change in God's nature.<sup>80</sup> Again, Maimonides' assertion that there is absolutely no relation between God and created beings or time is false. Is not God the cause of all existing being? But if He is, there is already a relation established, or if we assume that time is eternal, there is a relation of likeness between God and time. But Crescas sees as well as Maimonides the danger involved in ascribing to God positive attributes and at the same time asserting that He is simple and one. Yet, he says, there is really no contradiction. The fact that we humans may conceive plurality through attributes does not mean real plurality. His infinite goodness which is His essence unites them. Goodness here should be understood to mean perfection, or in other words, God is infinitely perfect—what Spinoza calls in his writings the absolute perfect,<sup>81</sup> not perfect after its kind. Again, since God is indivisible and simple, and perfection is essential, then why cannot existence or any of the other attributes, as potency or wisdom, be posited as a positive attribute in just the same relation as light

והנה אי אפשר לי מבלתי שנער דל ספקות שבאו בדרביו . . אם תחלה אחר שהחთרים שיתואר ביחסו לו לולתו שיביא להעדר נמנע מהקו כמו שלא יהיה דבר בפועל לו ואח"כ ישוב בפועל הנה אך התיר מן החთר שיתואר הרבר בפועלתו כאלו אמר פעל ועשה וכבר שזה כבר יביא אל העדר שקדם הפעולה או העיטה או הבראה כבר היה בכך ואח"כ שב בפועל, *Or Adonai*, p. 23a.

<sup>81</sup> *Epistola XXXI*, Opera, V, 11.

is posited of a luminous body? Let us, following up the analogy, suppose that the first cause is a luminous body; it is consequently necessary of existence. Is its light, though not identical with the essence of the body, less necessary of existence, or can the body not be described by it? The light is not a separate thing, but is an essential quality through which the body may be described. In a similar manner, we can call the attributes of God positive, especially such as eternity, existence, and unity, and yet they do not imply plurality.<sup>82</sup> It is true that so far as our conception is concerned we cannot give them a positive content, for that would determine God, and we must use the negative, e.g. as existent, not non-existent, &c., but in regard to God himself they are surely positive, and He can be described by them.<sup>83</sup>

Especially precarious is Maimonides' position, says Crescas, when we consider the other attributes such as wisdom and potency. What does he mean by saying that potency means absence of weakness, or knowing, privation of ignorance? He does not remove the positive content from the attribute. There is no *tertium quid* between knowing and not knowing, if not not-knowing; hence it necessarily follows that God is knowing. But if the attribute of knowing has a positive content, what then is that content? It is not identical with essence, for the essence of God is inconceivable in its totality; and surely it cannot

<sup>82</sup> לו הונח על דרך משל מאיר מהמחובי המציאותות לעצמו המנע ממנו האור המהויב ממנו בעזם חיוב המציאותות אשר ל', לא כי האור אינו עצם נברל מעצמו שהוא ציריך למרכיב ומকבץ אבל הוא דבר עצמתי שרואין שיתואר בו כן הוא עניין התארים באלו יה'

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

be an accident, for that is excluded from the conception. It follows, therefore, that positive attributes are essential. Again, he says, if we assume the Maimonidian view, it follows that God will be absolutely qualityless, almost equal to nothing; for, he says, if we deny any essential attributes, it is not that we deny our knowledge of them, but the having itself. God will be then entirely negative, neither potent nor impotent, nor anything, and this is absurd. It is evident, therefore, that positive attributes must be posited of God though we cannot determine their content, and for human purposes may be described negatively.<sup>84</sup>

As for unity, Crescas thinks that in a similar manner to existence it is not essence, but essential. If we shall say that it is essence, we shall encounter the same difficulty in predication as in existence. When we say that man is one, we do not state anything new about man, but merely repeat that man is man. It follows, therefore, as has been mentioned, that unity is an essential attribute and a rational mode of conception. It follows also, since unity is really a mode of differentiation, that God who is the most differentiated of all other beings, is one par excellence.<sup>85</sup>

Crescas makes here a keen observation, namely, that unity has a double meaning. It means simplicity, that the object is not composite; and it is also to be understood in a numerical sense, that there is only one God. Spinoza

<sup>84</sup> *Or Adonai*, p. 25 a-b.

ולוּה הוּא מבוֹאָר שָׁאוֹן הַיְחֹוד מִקְרָה וְלֹא דָבָר נָסֶף עַל הַעַצֶּם אֶלְאָ  
 דָבָר עַצְמֵי אֶבֶל הַנִּמְצָא בְּפֶעֶל וּמוֹגֵל וּבְחוּנָה שְׁבָלוֹת מִהֻּעָדר הַרְבָּוי בּוּ  
 כִּי לְהִיוֹת האחדות נוֹתַנָּה הנְבָלָה וּהַבְּדָל לְנִמְצָא הוּא מִבּוֹאָר שַׁהַנִּמְצָא  
 שְׁהָוָא בְּתִכְלַית הַחֲבָרֶל מִכָּל הַנִּמְצָאוֹת וְאֵם הַיְהָ שְׁלָא יִפּוֹל בּוּ הַנְּבָלָה הַנָּה  
 וְלֹא יִזְהַרְבֵּר אֶתְמָתֵי בְּשֵׁם הַאֶחָד מִזְוֹלָתוּ

expresses the latter by *unicum*.<sup>86</sup> As for the first, it was well established, for God is necessary of existence, and everything necessary of existence cannot be composite, as has been discussed.<sup>87</sup> The question remains in regard to the second. Is there only one God? We have shown above that Crescas always considered the arguments substantiating the oneness as insufficient. The interdependence of the world and the harmony of action are counterbalanced by his supposition of the possible existence of two worlds (cp. above). There is, however, one more argument, which says that since we posit the infinite potency of God, the existence of another God is impossible, for they would constrain each other. Yet, says Crescas, these arguments are not convincing, for it is still possible that the other one is not active. He, therefore, concludes that the numerical unity of God is only a subject of revelation.<sup>88</sup>

It must be admitted that Crescas in this point is not only weak, but prejudiced. His polemical nature overmastered the philosophical. What does he mean by a passive God? Does it not contradict his own conception of God? If God possesses infinite potency, what then is that other being? It is neither active nor potential. It is evident that this absurd argument was only advanced just as a shot at the philosophers, though it fell short of the mark, and Crescas well conceived it.

It is necessary, in conclusion of this part of Crescas's theory, to say a few words concerning his influence on Spinoza, regarding which there is some difference of opinion. Dr. Joel, in his book *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas*,<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Cogitata Metaph.*, II, 2.

<sup>87</sup> The same proof has been quoted by Spinoza.

<sup>88</sup> *Or Adonai*, p. 26 a.

<sup>89</sup> Pp. 19-24.

asserts that Spinoza was greatly influenced by Crescas in the formation of his theory of attributes. He says that Crescas makes a distinction between attributes of an essential nature and such as are rational modes of conception. Again, that this is the same distinction that Spinoza makes between attributes and *propria*,<sup>90</sup> namely, such qualities which are a part of God's own essence, though they do not affect His simplicity or immutability. It is difficult to agree with Joel, both that such a distinction is made by Crescas and that it is identical with Spinoza's. Crescas calls both kinds of attributes, such as eternity, existence, and unity (rather simplicity), those that Joel would include in the second class, and knowledge or potency, which are, according to Joel, in the first class, by one name, namely, תוארים עצמיים,<sup>91</sup> which means essential attributes. It is true that Crescas says that the first-named attributes are less apt to affect the simplicity of God, for their content is only a rational mode with a negative form, as existence, not non-being, &c.<sup>92</sup> But no real distinction is found. He says distinctly, 'It is clear from the foregoing that existent and unity (simplicity), which are predicated of Him, His name be praised, are essential attributes',<sup>93</sup> or as Dr. Joel would express himself, 'wesenhafter Art'. Where then does Joel get his distinction? Again, Spinoza bases his distinction on the definition that the attributes, according to him, are identical with the essence of God which is

<sup>90</sup> *Or Adonai*, p. 25 a.

<sup>91</sup> *Korte Verhandeling*, Opera, p. 274.

<sup>92</sup> ובש הקדומות שאיננו אלא בחינה שכליות שהוא בלתי הוה והמציאות שהוא הוראת היותו בלא נעדן והאחדות שהוא מורה על היותו בזולתו רבוי בעצמו והוא אין בו שניות בצד מן העדרין

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25 a.

conceived through them; of such we know only two, thought and extension. The *Propria* are such as belong to God, but do not express His essence.<sup>94</sup> Of such a distinction there is no mention in Crescas. On the contrary, Crescas asserts that the essence of God is inconceivable. This is really a fundamental difference between Crescas and Spinoza. Again, we find many of those *Propria* of Spinoza among the essential attributes, as, for instance, knowledge.<sup>95</sup> How, then, can we say that it is the same distinction? We can nevertheless admit that the idea found in Crescas that there are some attributes which, though predicated of God, do not by all means express His essence, is also found in Spinoza. But to consider it as a source of influence is exaggerating.

I want to direct attention to another point of contact between Crescas and Spinoza, which brings the possible influence into a more favourable light. It is the relation of the attributes to the essence of God. Crescas teaches the infinite perfection of God, and the absolute unity of His essence, in spite of the fact that we predicate essential attributes of Him, for in His infinite essence they are all one. It is true that he does not make clear in what way these essential attributes are to be understood; they do not express His essence, for His essence cannot be conceived by us, but nevertheless are positive and essential. It may be that in his insisting that the essence of God is not conceived by us, he means to say that, while these attributes are essential, yet they are not to be understood as final; but our conception of them is incomplete. For instance, we predicate knowledge as an attribute, but we do not know what kind or what degree of knowledge He possesses.

<sup>94</sup> *Korte Verhandeling*, pp. 274-92.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

Similarly, Spinoza teaches the infinite perfection of God,<sup>96</sup> and that He possesses infinite attributes,<sup>97</sup> all of which constitute one being. What Spinoza means by attributes was a matter of great controversy, but the interpretation of Fischer<sup>98</sup> is the correct one. According to it, the infinite attributes are infinite forces of God and not different substances. Since the attributes are infinite, it follows that the human mind will never know all of them, and so the essence of God is not conceived fully. The attributes known by us are thought and extension. We see, therefore, that in spite of the widely separating gulf between the two systems, there is still a marked similarity in the basic conception of the attributes. Both teach infinite perfection, infinite unity in spite of the positive content of the attributes, and the incomplete knowledge of the essence. Of course, I am not blind to the differences of their teachings. Spinoza emphasizes that the attributes of extension and thought express the essence of God as forces, and as such are fully conceived by man. Crescas, on the other hand, would shrink in horror from such a conception. But such differences are due to the different nature of Spinoza's system, which is wholly divergent from that of Crescas, as far as the God of a religious man is from the God of a philosopher. Yet they afford points of similarity, especially at the base of their systems where the variance is at its minimum. It can almost be said that Spinoza's system is only a result of carrying out Crescas's principles to their extreme logical conclusion. It will be best illustrated in the chapters on the relation of God and the world, for it is there that the real divergence is evident.

<sup>96</sup> *Epistola XL.*

<sup>97</sup> Def. 6; *Ethics*, I.

<sup>98</sup> K. Fischer, *Spinoza*, pp. 380-92.

We see, then, that in spite of Fischer's contention against any possible influence of Crescas on Spinoza there are to be found traces of marked likeness between them. We must not forget that when we say influence we do not mean that the latter actually followed the former, or anything to that effect; what it signifies is a thought impulse and a pointing in a certain direction. That Spinoza read Crescas carefully, and not, as Fischer maintains, was only imperfectly acquainted with him, we have shown above. I wish to remark that Fischer is not entirely just to Crescas by saying of him, 'Denn selbst die Einheit Gottes ist bei ihm kein Object der Erkenntnis, sondern der Offenbarung', and using this fact as an argument to disprove the influence of Crescas on Spinoza. I presume that Fischer means by the words 'die Einheit Gottes' the numerical unity of God, for the essential unity was demonstrated by Crescas as clearly as by Spinoza. But even in regard to the former, it was already mentioned (cp. above) that Crescas's remark in that regard should be taken with reserve, and that it is only a polemic expression. In reality, numerical unity of God is established according to Crescas, since he posits the infinite potency of God. Of course, Spinoza deduces unity with great accuracy from the mere definition of God; but the difference of deduction in the two systems in regard to a certain point does not prove that it is impossible for one system to have influenced the other. It is only religious sufficiency that prevented Crescas from following up his own definition and reaching the same conclusion.

In concluding his theory of attributes Crescas discusses a few emotional qualities which are to be attributed to God. The discussion is interesting, both by the novelty of the

conception, as well as by the interpretations of the emotions. Aristotle teaches the happiness of God, and deduces it in the following manner. We must attribute to God the highest activity which is no higher thing than contemplation, and since we humans feel pleasure and happiness in thought, it follows that God who is eternally active, namely contemplative, and the quality of His contemplation being of the highest and purest kind, must necessarily be always happy.<sup>99</sup> Such a conception, says Crescas, is untenable, and is based on a false theory of emotions. Joy and sorrow, or pleasure and pain, are contraries, and consequently fall under the category of action. They really do not depend on knowledge, but on will. Pleasure is only the gratification we derive from the carrying out of our will. Pain, on the other hand, is the feeling we experience when our will is obstructed.<sup>100</sup> If we do experience joy in our knowing, it is because there is a will to know, and by attaining knowledge we overcome the obstacle to our will. It will be evident, therefore, that as far as God is concerned we cannot attribute any happiness to Him. His knowledge has no limitations, and there are no obstructions to His will. When we humans experience any pleasure at conceiving a certain thing, it is because that conception was not known to us, and in overcoming the obstacle we experience a sense of pleasure. But in regard to God such a mode is inapplicable: whence, then, His happiness at knowing? Crescas asserts, therefore, that if we do

<sup>99</sup> *Metaph.*, XII, 7; *Ethics*, X.

<sup>100</sup> כי השמחה איננה זולת ערבות מהרצון והעצב הוא ההתנגדות ברכזון  
ווזם הפעלוות נפשיהם, *Or Adonai*, p. 27 a. Just to know how modern this theory of emotions is, we have but to compare the views on pleasure and pain of the English psychologist, E. G. Stout, in his *Manual of Psychology*, chapter on Pain and Pleasure.

attribute happiness to God it is because of His love. God is voluntarily the cause of all being, and since we know that existence is goodness, it follows that in so far as God is voluntarily the cause of being, He is voluntarily good. The continuation of the existence of beings is then the continual emanation of His goodness. It is evident, then, that in so far as God continually emanates His goodness and perfection voluntarily, in so far He loves the emanation of goodness necessarily, and it is this action of emanating permeated with love that is described as joy or happiness.<sup>101</sup> This happiness or joy is essential to God, for, as we have seen, it is inherently connected with His being the cause of things and the continual emanation of His goodness and perfection. We cannot help but express our admiration for such a high ethical conception of the happiness of God, in comparison with which the Aristotelian as well as the Spinozistic (as will be shown) pales as regards the glow of ethical warmth.

In regard to the relations of Crescas and Spinoza on this point of *Amor Dei*, Joel lays great stress on the influence exerted by the former on the latter. The *Amor Dei intellectualis* has two meanings: the love of man towards God, and that of God towards man; but we have to defer the former to a later discussion, where the relation of God and man will be discussed, and occupy ourselves at present with the latter. Joel contends that Crescas's love of God is not far from the teaching of Spinoza that God loves Himself with an infinite intellectual love.<sup>102</sup>

הנה במא שישפי מוחטב והשלמות ברצין וכונה הנה א"כ והוא <sup>101</sup>  
אהוב ההטבה והשפעה הטובה בחכירה והוא אהבה זולת ערבות הרצין,  
*Or Adonai*, I, 27a-b.

<sup>102</sup> *Ethics*, V, XXXV, Proposition.

It seems to me that Joel exaggerates a little. There is, no doubt, a similarity in language, but the content is quite different. That of Crescas is voluntaristic, that of Spinoza is intellectual in essence. Pleasure, according to Spinoza, is a transition from a lesser to a greater perfection,<sup>103</sup> and since pleasure is a self-conscious feeling, knowledge necessarily accompanies it. Again, perfection itself is only knowledge, for, according to the whole Spinozistic system, true ideas have an adequate object, and whatever is false can surely not be perfection. Love is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause.<sup>104</sup> The external is only necessary as far as human beings are concerned, the idea of cause is the main necessary condition. It follows, then, that since God is absolutely infinite and necessarily possesses infinite perfection, for reality and perfection are synonymous,<sup>105</sup> He rejoices in that perfection. Furthermore, this rejoicing is accompanied by the idea of Himself, for God possesses that idea,<sup>106</sup> which is the idea of His own being as a cause, and this is what is meant by intellectual love. We say, therefore, that God loves Himself. But since in God there is not only the idea of His essence, but also of that which follows necessarily from His essence,<sup>107</sup> and under this all beings, and men especially, are meant, it follows that in so far God loves Himself He loves man.<sup>108</sup>

We have seen the principal features of this Spinozistic love of God, and it is evident that its content is materially different from that of Crescas. On its emotional and

<sup>103</sup> *Ethics*, Part III, Definition of Emotions II.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Definition of Emotions II.

<sup>105</sup> *Ethics*, II, Definition VI.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Proposition III.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Proposition III.

<sup>108</sup> *Ethics*, V, Proposition XXXV, Corollary.

formal side it approaches Aristotle's view, which also makes the happiness of God consist in thinking, and Himself the subject of His thoughts. But there is essential difference, this is the idea of cause. It is not the act of thought that makes up the rejoicing, but the being a cause and ground of all being. This is the fundamental difference that widely separates the two conceptions. On the other hand, it is this same idea of cause that forms a point of contact with Crescas's view. The latter states that in so far as God is a cause of existence He loves the good, for existence is a continual emanation of good and perfection. But, again, there is a fundamental difference; Crescas excludes all knowledge from that love. On the other hand, according to Crescas's theory of emotions, which by the way is a very true one, pleasure is not connected with knowledge, but with will. And also in regard to God's love or happiness he insists on will. With Spinoza, however, will is entirely omitted; the mechanical or necessary conception takes the ascendancy; knowledge and reality are the principal ingredients in the teaching of Spinoza.

We may, therefore, conclude that while the Crescasian and Spinozistic views on the love of God have a basic point of contact, yet they are totally different in their content; the first is an emotional-voluntaristic, the other a strongly intellectual. There is a possibility that the term love of God, if not directly borrowed from Crescas, is at least influenced by his use of it, as the term love does not precisely describe the idea which Spinoza wishes to convey by it. There are some critics who score Spinoza severely for his introducing the conception of *Amor Dei*, and point to the difficulty involved in speaking of God as self-loving, as if He were composed of subject and object.

They assert that the conception is contradictory to the fundamental Spinozistic doctrines.<sup>109</sup> But this discussion is beyond our point of interest. The real point of gravity of that question is the *Amor Dei* of man, but this is reserved for the next chapters. In general, I wish to say that I do not intend to minimize the influence of Crescas upon Spinoza. On the contrary, I believe that both systems afford many points of contact, and, furthermore, that their source is really one, except that they run in divergent lines. It is possible to find a goodly number of likenesses, but they are never commensurable. To this point more space will be devoted in the coming chapters.

<sup>109</sup> See K. Fischer in his *Spinoza*, p. 573.

(*To be continued.*)